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support@adultpdf.com

HOMELESS AND OTHER SPECIAL POPULATIONS

OBJECTIVE #1:

Prevention:

To strengthen and enhance prevention-related programs and services, so as to minimize the number of Cambridge individuals and families who become homeless.

Number of Households to be Served:

Over the coming year, the City of Cambridge anticipates providing prevention-related assistance to 800-plus individuals and 150-plus families at risk of homelessness. In addition, the City anticipates serving 200-plus individuals and 75-plus families who, though not “homeless” in accordance with the McKinney definition, lack suitable housing of their own (i.e., are doubled up or “couch hop” from one temporary situation with friends or family to another).

Expected Resources

- ***Federal Funds***
 - Community Development Block Grant Program
 - FEMA Funds
 - Section 8 Certificates and Vouchers
- ***State Funds***
 - State Payments for Legal Assistance
- ***Local Funds***
 - City of Cambridge Tax Dollars
 - Cambridge Housing Assistance Fund (private donors)
 - Cambridge Fund for Housing (private donors)
 - Families to Families Fund (private donors)

Strategies

Homelessness/Eviction Prevention: Continue and expand prevention services (e.g., prevention-focused case management; free legal assistance, advocacy, and mediation support to prevent eviction; and targeted financial assistance to address arrearages and prevent eviction or to support transition to alternate, more affordable housing). The City of Cambridge contributes some \$190,000/year in municipal tax dollars towards homelessness prevention, including over \$150,000 for staff who provide emergency case management for at-risk individuals and families and a pro-rated (50%) share of the \$80,000 cost for rent/utilities to operate the Multi-Service Center. In addition, approximately half of a

\$190,000 contract with the State Department of Transitional Assistance and \$22,000 in CDBG funding for the City's Housing Assistance Program fund landlord/tenant counseling/mediation and housing search services to prevent family homelessness. (The other 50% of the DTA and CDBG-funded program pays for housing search services for already homeless families.) Approximately half of the staff time funded by another \$36,000 in CDBG money pays for housing search, and related services for at-risk elders and/or persons with disabilities. A \$20,000 CDBG grant plus \$50,000 in municipal grant funding supplement private and State IOLTA funding for legal services to prevent eviction. A significant portion of the \$100,000-plus in privately raised funds (Cambridge Housing Assistance Fund, Cambridge Fund for Housing the Homeless, Bridge Fund, Family to Family Fund) is annually used to cover emergency payments to landlords to prevent homelessness, supplementing the thousands of dollars in FEMA funds used to prevent eviction and/or loss of heat/utilities for Cambridge households

Discharge Planning: Support advocacy efforts to promote more effective discharge planning by State-administered and/or State-funded mental health, corrections, and protective services agencies

Employment Assistance: Maintain and enhance access to employment services (e.g., free assistance at the Cambridge Employment Program and the National Student Partnership office housed at the Multi-Service Center), to prevent the impoverishment that leads to homelessness. Most notably, the Cambridge Employment Program is funded by a combination of \$80,000 in municipal funding and \$52,000 in "Moving to Work" federal funding through the Cambridge Housing Authority to provide employment assistance to low-income persons. In addition, a portion of WIA funding administered by Employment Resources Inc. through its contract with the local Career Center pays for employment services offered to at-risk persons.

Housing Assistance: Continue and expand efforts to increase the supply of affordable housing in Cambridge (see other sections of this Plan), sustain efforts to prevent the loss of affordable housing due to "expiring use" provisions, and maximize utilization of Section 8 subsidies to enable tenants to remain in existing housing. Most notably, the Cambridge Housing Authority has permission from HUD (i) to raise the Section 8 rent ceiling to 120% of the FMR, and (ii) to issue Section 8 vouchers, rather than certificates, which, in the face of rapidly rising rental rates, makes it more possible for subsidy holders to obtain and retain housing in Cambridge, by allowing them to supplement the CHA rent payment (limited by the 120% FMR rent ceiling) by paying up to 40% of their income toward the unsubsidized portion of the rent.

OBJECTIVE #2:

Access:

To maintain and expand access by homeless persons to programs and services which can meet their basic human needs, so that to the extent that they are willing to accept such assistance, every homeless individual and family has, at a minimum, a safe place to sleep, food, clothing, and necessary health care.

Number of Households to be Served:

On the night of the most recent (November 25-26, 2002) point-in-time homeless census, the City of Cambridge provided shelter or transitional housing to 37 homeless families and 341 homeless individuals. (That night, at least three additional homeless persons were identified as being inpatients in local hospitals, and another 10 unsheltered persons had to be transported from the free congregate supper in Cambridge to an overflow shelter in Boston.) An additional 60-plus homeless persons were counted sleeping in the streets, parks, cars, and subway stations in Cambridge (not counted 9 so-called empty bedrooms, where census takers observed bedding or other signs of very recent use, but did not observe a person). Some of these unsheltered persons utilize congregate meal or drop-in programs, where they can obtain clothing, showers, and health care; others avoid organized programs on all but the harshest winter days.

At this time, the City is unable to accurately assess the number of unduplicated homeless persons served over the course of a year; however, with the ongoing implementation of MIS software at local homeless-serving programs, the City hopes to have the ability by 2004 to provide such data.

Expected Resources

- ***Federal Funds***
 - Community Development Block Grant Program
 - Emergency Shelter Grant Program
 - McKinney-Vento Supported Housing Program for various services
 - Federal Funding for Health Care for the Homeless services
 - Federal PACE funding for mental health services for the homeless
 - Federal Mental Health and Substance Abuse Block Grant
- ***State Funds***
 - State (and federally matched) Emergency Assistance payments for shelter services
 - State (and federally matched) Medicaid Services
 - State (and federally matched) payments for battered women's shelter services
 - State payments for residential substance abuse treatment services and shelter
- ***Local Funds***
 - City of Cambridge Tax Dollars

Cambridge Health Alliance funding for family shelter-based health care case management and shelter services for substance abusing homeless persons
Foundation, corporate, and donor grants and contributions

Strategies

Shelter Services: A network of six shelters for individual adults (five “dry” shelters and one “wet” shelter for active substance abusers), two family shelters, and one shelter for battered women provide emergency shelter for homeless persons (funded by a combination of approximately \$3 million of State and federally matched resources, as listed above, as well as tens of thousands of privately raised dollars). ESG grants provided \$53,000 in support of shelter operations and/or renovations. (See also narrative under Objective #3 for transitional housing.). A van program funded by a \$14,650 ESG grant and privately raised funds provides emergency transportation to Boston shelters for unsheltered individuals in Cambridge.

Food and Meal Programs: A network of ten food pantries (funded with FEMA grants; foundation, corporate, and private grants and donations; and an annual \$96,000 City grant) distribute emergency food in Cambridge; three of these pantries serve significant numbers of homeless persons. Seven Churches or Church-sponsored organizations, one non-profit, and the City’s Council on Aging sponsor a range of lunch and supper programs 365 days a year, serving a mix of homeless and low income persons. All homeless families and some homeless individuals access federal Food Stamps and eligible homeless families access WIC coupons. Homeless individuals are assisted by case management staff in obtaining Food Stamps based on income eligibility. All shelters for individuals provide dinner and breakfast for guests funded by a combination of FEMA grants and foundation, corporate, and private donations and grants. All family shelters provide cooking facilities for guests. \$37,500 in CDBG funding helps support an emergency food recovery and distribution program which supplies food to nearly all of the aforementioned pantry, shelter, and meal programs.

Clothing Services: All shelters for individuals receive and distribute clothing for guests. These efforts are supplemented by clothing distribution programs serving guests at five drop-in programs, and a retail second hand clothing store operated as a transitional employment program for homeless persons by CASPAR in neighboring Somerville. A network of other charitable programs collect and distribute donated clothing for both homeless and low income persons.

Health Care and Related Services: Local hospitals and the network of neighborhood health centers affiliated with the Cambridge Hospital (the Cambridge Health Alliance) all accept and enroll patients in the Medicaid (locally known as Mass Health) and Free Care programs. (All homeless families whose shelter services are funded under the Emergency Assistance portion of TANF are automatically eligible for and enrolled in Medicaid; homeless individuals must qualify on the basis of income and age/disability.) In addition, health care is available at shelter-based clinics operated by the federally funded (\$50,000-plus) Health Care for the Homeless program, and for youth and young adults by a mobile